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Letter dated 9 January 2003 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that the Government of Lebanon requests the Security Council to extend the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), which will end on 31 January 2003, for an additional interim period of six months, in accordance with the provisions of Security Council resolutions 425 (1978) and 426 (1978) of 19 March 1978. The Lebanese Government is requesting this in view of the fact that the continued presence of the Force is still necessary if it is desired that the mandate trusted to it be discharged. This accords with your apposite conclusions set forth in your reports to the Security Council that a large portion of the Force's mandate has not yet been fulfilled, particularly with regard to "restoring international peace and security" in the region. This request has become the more urgent in the light of Israel's daily serious violations and provocations, by land, sea and air, which constitute ongoing aggression against Lebanese sovereignty and a flagrant violation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

In this context, Lebanon affirms the necessity of maintaining UNIFIL, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 425 (1978) and 426 (1978), particularly in the light of the situation prevailing in the region, which has deteriorated and become extremely critical. The maintenance of UNIFIL's mandate would also prove the international community's commitment to restoring Lebanon's sovereignty over all its territory, as provided in resolutions 425 (1978) and 426 (1978), and would affirm the strong support given by the Security Council in successive resolutions for the territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon within its internationally recognized boundaries.

Lebanon commends the ongoing contribution of UNIFIL to the demining process and the efforts made by the donor countries in this regard. Lebanon calls upon the Security Council to put pressure on Israel to produce the maps and additional documents relating to the locations of mines left by the Israeli occupation of Lebanese territory, inasmuch as it has become clear to the United Nations that more still remain. These mines are still causing death and injury to Lebanese civilians, curbing their freedom of activity and movement and impeding the freedom and movement of UNIFIL, and they constitute a threat to the lives of the people working in the Force and in the demining programme. Lebanon also calls upon the Security Council to ensure the release of Lebanese detained illegally

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and for many years in Lebanese prisons, in blatant defiance of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the two Additional Protocols thereto.

Lebanon reaffirms its commitment to the peace process in the Middle East, with the aim of achieving a comprehensive and just peace in the region, on the basis of United Nations resolutions and the Madrid Conference precedent and in accordance with the integrated Arab peace initiative which was approved unanimously at the Beirut Summit on 28 March 2002 and was rejected by Israel, which proceeded to invade the West Bank.

I avail myself of this opportunity to commend, on behalf of the Lebanese Government, the efforts being made by the leadership and personnel of UNIFIL and the efforts and sacrifices being made by the participating countries in implementation of its mandate.

In addition, the Government of Lebanon conveys to you its appreciation for your untiring efforts in supporting the role of UNIFIL in southern Lebanon.

I request that this letter be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Houssam Asaad **Diab**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.